

MOMENTS on the MOUNT

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The Futility of Opposing God's Anointed

A STUDY OF THE SECOND PSALM

The occasion out of which the Second Psalm arose is uncertain. Various conjectures have been given, such as David's conquest of the confederacy of the Philistines, Syrians, Phoenicians, and others as recorded in II Samuel 5 (Clarke, Lange, et al.). But the uncertainty still remains. The authorship is also in question among the various schools of commentators. Some attribute it to the pen of Solomon (Ewald), others to Isaiah or Hezekiah (De-litzsch), while others insist that David is its author. The weight of evidence seems to favor the latter, especially in view of the fact that it is so attributed in Acts 4:25-26.

Psalm 2 may be thought of as a historical-prophetical psalm. We may first read from the historical viewpoint, with an eye to the literal David. Many of the expressions take on color and significance against the background of David's accession to the throne of Israel amidst the rebellion and conspiracies that swirled around him. As God's anointed, however, he ascended the throne and wielded the scepter of power for 40 illustrious years, overcoming opposition and consolidating the 12 tribes into a unified kingdom. Nevertheless, the diction is too high and exaggerated to be limited to the historical Davidic kingdom. Hence, we must reread the psalm from the prophetical viewpoint, with an eye to the spiritual David. Immediately a throb of expectancy pulsates through our soul as our attention is directed from the type (David) to the great Antitype (Jesus Christ). The coloring which appeared too bold and glaring for the historical king of Israel no longer appears so against the background of the ultimate triumph of God's Anointed over the tu-

multuous nations conspiring against Him.

The Second Psalm has for its theme "The Futility of Opposing God's Anointed" (Acts 4:25-26). Even while the nations rush about in riotous rage, taking counsel against God's Son, God, in calm serenity, enthrones His Messiah according to predetermined decree.

The literary structure of the psalm is beautiful. It consists of four strophes of three stanzas each. Our outline below follows this poetical construction.

I. THE CONSPIRACY OF THE NATIONS (vss. 1-3).

Three primary scenes unfold in this connection. We observe:

1. *The agitation produced by the conspirators* (vs. 1). Here the psalmist declares in graphic terms the tumultuous resentment (*rage*) smoldering in the collective breast of the peoples. Jew and gentile (Acts 4:27), as they meditate and devise (*imagine*) evil and riotous conspiracies against the Lord and against His Anointed. "Why" suggests the futile (*vain*) purpose of these agitations.

2. *The aggression plotted by the conspirators* (vs. 2). Here we see the determined (*set themselves*) deliberation (*take counsel*) going on in the council chambers of the kings and rulers of the earth. This con-

By Dr. Raymond Gingrich, President,
Akron Bible Institute, Akron, Ohio

spiracy is carried out with crafty planning, not with foolish haste.

3. *The anarchy proposed by the conspirators* (vs. 3). Taking their cue from their father, the Devil, who rebelled against the authority of God, these conspirators announced their intention of overthrowing divine restraint and authority like "refractory bulls" (*break their bands . . . cast away their cords*). Like the Israelites in the days of His flesh declared, "We will not have this man to rule over us" (Luke 19:14) and "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), so ere the divine kingdom is set up, a violent struggle will ensue by the combined might of Israelite and gentile rebels who are determined to assert their own wills over that of the Son of God.

II. THE CONTEMPT OF THE LORD (vss. 4-5).

Three primary scenes appear in this act. We observe:

1. *The provocation of the Lord* (vs. 4). From the tumultuous roaring of the multitude and the deliberative meditation in the council chambers of the conspirators to the majestic serenity of the throne room of heaven we are now led! Here we see Him who sits upon the throne, beholding these earth scenes, looking with utter contempt (*laugh*) upon their vain imaginations, and holds them in scorn (*derision*).

2. *The vexation of the rebels* (vs. 5). After a time (*then*), without even rising from His seat, even though sorely provoked and angry (*wrath . . . sore displeasure*), God strikes terror and dismay (*vex*) into the evil conspirators, not with audi-



Dr. R. E. Gingrich

ble words, but with an accomplished fact, namely,

3. *The exaltation of the King* (vs. 6). What a grand exclamation! God has already done what the nations were attempting to prevent! How futile to attempt to prevent what God had determined to do before time began.

"Thy foes in vain designs engage;
Against His throne in vain they rage,
Like rising waves, with angry roar,
That dash and die upon the shore."

III. THE COVENANT WITH THE SON (vss. 7-9).

Having been led by the psalmist into the council chambers of the conspirators to observe their conspiracies, and thence into the throne room of God to witness His contempt for their devices, with its accompanying vexation and triumph, we now are presented to the Lord's Anointed, to observe His assumption of the throne of the kingdom decreed before time began.

1. *The resolution of the Son* (vs. 7a). The Son of God resolved to declare the basis upon which his royal investiture rested. It was by a divine decree covenanted between Father and Son in the eternal councils before the world began. Upon it rested Messiah's claim to the scepter of power.

2. *The revelation of the covenant* (vss. 7b-9). The Son's right to the kingdom rests upon two titles, namely: (1) *His position*, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (vs. 7b). The primary meaning here relates to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, by which He was declared to be the Son of God with power, and by which His right to the throne was established (Rom. 1:4; Acts 13:33ff.). (2) *His petition* (vss. 8-9). The primary thought here is that of His subordination to the Father, and of receiving the kingdom from Him by petition (*ask of me*). This kingdom is universal in extent (*utmost parts of the earth*), and powerful in its expression (*break them with a rod of iron . . . dash them in pieces*). Even in the Kingdom Age there will be attempted rebellion against the Lord, and against the Lord's Anointed, but it will come to naught (Zech. 14:16-19).

IV. THE COUNSEL TO THE RULERS (vss. 10-12).

The fourth strophe of the psalm presents a fitting conclusion to the foregoing action. The counsel em-

bodies three important principles, namely:

1. *The reflection enjoined upon the rulers* (vs. 10). In view of the futility of opposing God, and of the certain destruction of all who do, the rulers are admonished to reflect (*now—argumentative, not temporal*) upon these realities, and plan their program wisely, in harmony with the plan of God (*be instructed*).

2. *The reverence entreated from the rulers* (vs. 11). Rather than be broken as a piece of pottery, the rulers, setting the example, are to submit joyfully, and serve with reverent fear Him whom God has enthroned as His Messiah.

3. *The reconciliation encouraged for the rulers* (vs. 12). Before acceptable service can be offered to the King, the kiss of reconciliation (*kiss the Son*) must be offered. A great deal of discussion concerning the meaning of this passage has arisen. We believe that, together with any and all other ideas it may embody, the primary one is that of reconciliation. With the Father already angry at the nations (vs. 5), and the Son invested with power and authority to destroy the rebellious subjects (vs. 9), a state of reconciliation is needed to restore the rulers (and their subjects) to the divine favor. Hence they are counseled to "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry," and they too perish, like those of former days, from the earth.

The psalmist closes with an appeal to trust in the Lord as the assurance of a blessed state, and an insurance against the wrath of an angry God.

LITTLE THINGS

Shamgar had an ox-goad,

Rahab had a string,

Gideon had a trumpet,

David had a sling,

Samson had a jaw bone,

Moses had a rod;

Dorcas had a needle—

All were used for God.

— *Sunday School Times.*

TIME to me is so precious that with great difficulty can I steal one hour in eight days, either to satisfy myself or to gratify my friends.—
John Knox.